

# GEORGIA AND THE SECRET PROJECT FOR REDISTRIBUTION EUROPE 70-80S OF THE 18TH CENTURY

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**Abstract:** global international project of the 70s-80s of the XVIII century envisaging a new distribution of Europe based on the areas of the Ottoman Empire is reviewed in the article. This topic acquires a final feature in a conceptual form in the correspondence between Catherine II and the Emperor of Austria and the Holy Roman Empire Josephus II under the name of "Greek Project".

The Greek Project can be unequivocally considered as a key to the history of Georgia of 50s-80s of the XVIII century. A number of studies have shown that numerous problematic questions remain unanswered until the present day without considering the Greek Project.

Patience and tolerance shown by the King of Kartli - Kakheti Erekle II towards the Russian intrigues cannot be explained without the Greek Project. Georgia acquires qualitatively different and desired form of all time through the implementation of the Greek Project.

The Greek Project is an attempt to create a Christian global political model, a political background that can serve as a precondition for the restoration of a real united Caucasian Home, ensuring a guarantee of irreversible development and security for all royal principalities and khanate in the Caucasus.

This is the reason, the state oriented thinker Erekle II, avoids responding with aggression to the permanent intrigues of Russia. Erekle II tries to get involved in this great political game as a sovereign of a full-fledged political entity. Such attitude of Erekle is a guarantee of success for the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg. However, Russia chooses a completely different way - confronting Erekle's benevolent alliance with hostile, imperial sentiments. The main message of these sentiments is that a united Caucasus, independent Georgian kingdoms for Russia is considered to be an anti-Russian phenomenon.

This consistent and hostile attitude towards the Caucasus became the reason for the failure of Russian policy - it could neither establish a model of Christian globalization nor neutralize the Ottomans. Therefore, the study and understanding of the referred problem is rather important to determine the directions and priorities of modern political processes.

**Keywords:** Greek Project, Ottoman Empire, Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti, Erekle II, Catherine II, Joseph II, Friedrich II, Russian Empire, the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.

## ГРУЗИЯ И СЕКРЕТНЫЙ ПРОЕКТ ПЕРЕДЕЛА ЕВРОПЫ 70-80-Х ГОДОВ XVIII ВЕКА

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**Аннотация:** в статье рассматривается глобальный международный проект 70-80-х годов XVIII века, предусматривающий новый передел Европы за счёт территорий Османской империи. Эта тема в концептуальной форме приобретает окончательный вид под названием "Греческий проект", в переписке Екатерины II с императором Австрии и Священной Римской империи Иосифом II.

"Греческий проект" однозначно можно считать ключом к истории Грузии 50-80-х годов XVIII века. Ряд исследований показал, что без учёта "Греческого вопроса" многие проблемные вопросы до настоящего времени остаются без ответа.

Терпение, проявленное царем Картли - Кахетии Ираклием II, и его смиренное отношение к русским интригам невозможно объяснить без "Греческого проекта". Путём реализации "Греческого проекта" Грузия обретает качественно иную и желанную на все времена форму.

*Греческий проект - это попытка создать глобальную христианскую политическую модель, тот политический фон, который может служить предпосылкой для восстановления реального единого Кавказского Дома, обеспечить гарантии необратимого развития и безопасности для всех царств, княжеств и ханств на Кавказе.*

*По этой причине государственно мыслящий Ираклий II избегает агрессии в ответ на перманентные происки России. Ираклий II пытается участвовать в этой великой политической игре, как правитель полноценной политической единицы.*

*Такой подход Ираклия - залог успеха Императорского двора Санкт-Петербурга. Однако Россия выбирает совершенно иной путь - противопоставляя доброжелательному и союзническому отношению Ираклия, враждебные имперские настроения. Главный посыл этих настроений заключается в том, что Россиединый Кавказ, независимые грузинские царства и княжества, считает антироссийским явлением.*

*Такое последовательное и враждебное отношение к Кавказу стало причиной провала российской политики – ей не удалось создать модель христианской глобализации и нейтрализовать османов. Поэтому изучение и осмысление упомянутой проблемы, весьма важно для определения направлений и приоритетов современных политических процессов.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Греческий проект, Османская империя, Царство Картли-Кахети, Ираклий II, Екатерина II, Иосиф II, Фридрих II, Российская империя, Священная Римская империя германской нации.*

### **Introduction**

Political processes related to the Ottoman Empire, starting in Europe in the 60s of the XVIII century, are conceptually gathered in the so-called In the Greek Project. This is the plan of the Russian Emperor Catherine II and the Austrian Emperor Joseph II for dividing Europe, which took final shape in 1782 [41, p. 281-291; 1, p. 143-157].

The main target of Russia and Austria is the Ottoman Empire, the most stable empire in the world, that should be divided between these two states according to the Greek Project [42, p.1-4]. However, the referred division does not imply direct annexation of the areas [54, p. 35-37]. The Byzantine Empire shall be restored and headed by Constantine, grandson of Catherine (his name was selected on purpose at birth and raised in Greek) [10, p. 352-360]. A buffer kingdom of Dacia should be created as well, uniting Moldova, Wallachia and Bessarabia. [27, p. 5-11]

It is noteworthy that Georgia is not directly mentioned neither in the correspondence between Catherine II and Joseph II, nor in the official document compiled by the Russian Chancellor Bezborodko [44, p. 109-118], actually bringing the Grek Project to our era.

### **Purpose**

The referred period of the History of Georgia has not been studied yet within the context of an event, a seven-year-war, having a worldwide importance. In addition, the plan of that time for the redistribution of Europe – “Greek Project”, developed at the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg and Vienna has also been ignored. [34, p. 39; 35, p. 38-41]

The purpose of the current article is to find out whether it was planned to implement a “Greek Project” bypassing the Caucasus and Georgia, and if not, why the text of the project contains no information regarding the Caucasus and Georgia.

### **Research methods**

Our research topic is characterized by multifaceted forms. Therefore, different research methods are required for the complete analysis of the issue.

We rely on the methodological principles of objectivity, historicism, determinism, alternativeness, reconstruction, developed in the theoretical studies by the following scientists: Charles-Victor Langlois, Charles Seignobos; Robin George Collingwood; Marc Léopold Benjamin Bloch; Peter Lambert and Phillipp Schofield; Abrams Lynn; Brundage Anthony; Gregory Ian, Ell Paul; Hughes-Warrington; Iggers George, Wang Qiang Edward; Akira Iriye; Kaldellis Anthony; Koselleck Reinhart; Lukacs John; Munro Doug, Reid John; Quigley Carroll; Raaflaub Kurt.

### **Research results**

To the main question - whether it was planned to implement a “Greek Project” bypassing the Caucasus and Georgia – we have an unequivocally negative response.

It is also significant that the Caucasus has always remained within the horizon of the empires claiming world domination of all time due to its distinctive geostrategic location. Geographical proximity of the Caucasus makes this factor particularly acute for the Ottoman Empire.

Therefore, it is impossible for European states not to use the Caucasian factor as one of the trump cards within the global confrontation against the Ottomans.

First of all, claims of the Ottoman Empire on western Georgia directly suggests the authors of the project that they should consider the Georgian political space as an inevitable ally in the fight against the empire stretched across three continents. Secondly, the seizure of Constantinople and the establishment of control over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits through the creation of a buffer state was possible only if the Russian Empire were directly adjacent to this geographical area, which could have been accomplished through the conquest of adherent Georgia [50, p. 471], or through forming a certain political community with the kingdoms existing there. Obviously, it should have been based on a benevolent relationships.

Orthodoxy and common faith are preconditions for the common life and culture of Russia and Georgia, so during the confrontation with a different cultural space the referred factor creates rather a fertile ground for cooperation. This is the case when both parties of the political process have a desire to adhere to the moral principles of common faith.

However, Russian Imperial Court makes a principally different choice.

The fact that common faith of Georgians and Russians is only an imperial mask within referred political games was well realized by Erekle II during the battles of Russian-Turkish war of 1768-1774, when St. Petersburg Imperial Court Planned the liquidation of the King of Kartli-Kakheti by Totleben, and later abolition of the Kingdom at the initiative of Captain Lvov [6, p. 35-60].

These facts are somehow difficult to explain in the light of the events of the 70s of the XVIII century – the reason for planning the assassination of Erekle II or his dethrone by the Russian Empire is still vague, since the alliance with Erekle II the most influential political figure of Georgian kingdoms and Caucasus [45, p.10-18] meant the successful implementation of the far-reaching plans envisaged by the alliance and the Greek project as well. Political logic only indicated that Russian-Georgian confrontation during the fight against the Ottomans would be unequivocally unprofitable and obstructive for the imperial court of St. Petersburg.

However, Russia does not think like that and the reason should be probably sought in the reality within the European political backstage making it an ambitious empire of international rank. Participants of the international political game do not want to involve another influential player in these processes, this option means additional complaints and problems for them, therefore, quite an interesting political situation is developed - Erekle II, as a warring figure with the Ottomans, is exceptionally popular in Europe, however, his popularity is not reflected on the political status of Kartli-Kakheti in international games.

Fragmented Caucasus in the situation of confessional diversity is acceptable to Europe and first of all to Prussia. The Emperor of the latter, in the capacity of the Gray Cardinal, manages political processes of the Old Continent adroitly [9, p. 210-215; 43, p. 357-359]. This way Friedrich saves the Kingdom of Prussia in addition to his own life. The treaties concluded with Russia 1762 [28, p. 407] and 1764 [29, p. 19] actually strengthened its political order financially as well – Russia shall stay away from Europe. St. Petersburg shall confront to Constantinople. Further political processes of the whole Europe took place on this opposing vector.

This scenario was already played after the fall of Constantinople, when the Vatican realized that the Ottomans had a new target in the form of Europe and it was vital for them to shift the Ottoman aggression to another direction [31, p. 9]. Marriage of Sophia Palaeologus to Ivan III, used as a basis for the recognition of Russia as a successor of Constantinople, served this purpose [19, p. 26-102; 55, p. 5-22].

Through the attempt of King Frederick II of Prussia, Europe once again granted a special function to Russia, again to neutralize Ottoman resistance [11].

Russia was unable to resist temptation of imperial charm in those large-scale political processes. One of the strategies of the famous Roman imperial model - "Divide and Conquer" was precious for Russia as well.

### **The discussion of the results**

Greek Project plan unambiguously envisages the creation of a Christian community. This community transcends the orthodox framework and includes the whole of Christianity. Important detail - one of the initiators of this project is the Austrian Emperor Joseph II, who is also the Holy Roman Emperor of the German Nation. The old and new players of this Christian global area are clearly distinguished: Russia, Prussia, Austria, the Holy Roman Empire, Dacia, Byzantium... Naturally, the list clearly lacks a unified Georgian state area, the preconditions for the reincarnation of the latter becomes irreversible with the work of Erekle II. Hence, the political contours of a united Caucasian house are also formed, that should not have been difficult for European states to realize if desired.

The history of Christianity has unequivocally proved that the Georgian state and the Christian Church have guarded the faith for centuries, that has made quite a significant contribution to the struggle and saved Europe from islamization. The Didgori War was of greatest importance for Europe in this regard [30, p. 90-97; 36, p. 460-471]. The struggle of the Georgian nation against the Mongols was one of the main factors that restrained the Mongol aggression. However, they began to study the Mongolian language at the Sorbonne University in Paris as soon as the Mongols appeared, on the grounds that they would definitely contact the Mongolians as aggressors in Europe.

Taking into account the referred reality it is obvious that the interests of the Georgian states were in clear unison with the European interests. The above factors show that the Greek Project of Catherine II and Joseph II is a model of globalization of Christianity making it difficult to understand that Georgian statehood is superfluous for Russia. However, the Russian political moves are directed towards the fragmentation of the Caucasus and the independence of the Georgian kingdoms accordingly.

Despite such subjective imperial sentiments, it is clear that the implementation of the Greek Project without Georgian Christian politics and space is impossible even due to its geographical position.

It is also known that the Russian Empire as a Christian state has been regarded in the consciousness of Georgians as an ally in the fight against the Muslim political spectrum for centuries [51, p. 24-63; 12, p. 38-45], used by Russia in its favor for double, sometimes even triple political games. Examples of this are the tragedy of Zegami in 1605, the Adventure of Peter I in 1721 [20, p. 239-242]. Attempt to liquidate Erekle II by means of Tottleben and then decrown him from the Kartli-Kakheti throne by Captain Lvov is a continuation of the mentioned political style, followed by a cascade of similar political adventures- assassination of Prince Levan [4, p. 255-262; 17, p. 14-18], then murders of the ambassadors sent to the Emperor of Austria [49, p.79-126; 18, p. 11-14], rise of various adventurers at the royal court of Kartli-Kakheti [46, p. 108-112; 15, p. 130-138; 13, p. 33-35], poisoning future King George [32, p. 15], concluding the Treaty of Georgievsk [26, p.109-120; 37, p. 307-310] and then violating the terms of the latter in four years [14, p. 18-20; 25, p. 235-237]. These cascade of intrigues is crowned by the devastation of Tbilisi in 1795 by Agha Makhmad Khan [52, p. 170-175; 21, p. 209-221; 47, p. 52-53].

Even in late 1970s of the XVIII century, it became apparent that the political intrigues of St. Petersburg were of irreversible character. Erekle II aims to neutralize this difficult and at the same time chronic Russian political adventure by constantly seeking the ways of relations with Western European countries [53, p. 616-739; 7, p. 237-246].

That is why the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti needs a connection with the Austrian Emperor Joseph II, since it should actively get involved in the implementation of the Greek Project, that serves as a precondition of transferring Georgian Kingdoms and Caucasian political space in a qualitatively different condition.

Contact with the State of Venice is of great importance as well, the letters sent by Erekle II, emphasize the fact that Georgia has always defended Christianity faithfully [49, p. 78-135; 53, p. 557-583]. This is the message, with the sub-text for the Powerful States to recognize Georgian royal principalities as a full-fledged players in the newly started global religious-political processes.

The prism of the Greek Project clearly shows the impulses giving special motivation to Georgian Royal Kingdoms to be actively involved in international processes.

The main target of Russia and Austria is the Ottoman Empire, this is a position shared by Erekle II. In order to find out the reasons of like-mindedness of Erekle II, the negative processes facilitated by the Ottoman Empire in Georgian kingdoms shall be analyzed.

We believe, one important explanation is needed – in regard of understanding and consciousness Erekle is a large-scale politician, he is not locked in the shell of the king of Kartli-Kakheti. Erekle is the ruler guided by the principle of unified Georgian state. Moreover, his vision is broad and extends not only to whole Georgian but the scales of unified Caucasus as well. Accordingly, he thinks of the Ottoman Empire within a unified Caucasian prism.

Although the two political areas - the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti and the Ottoman Empire - are geographically separated; although they do not have a common border, Erekle evaluates the events from a common Caucasian point of view. Accordingly, the fact that two most important trump cards of the united Caucasus - access to the sea and the North Caucasus were neutralized by the Ottoman Empire, develops significant systemic difficulties for any political entity in the Caucasus.

The first major issue, forming an everyday and unresolved problem of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti is the Lezghian raid [3, p. 285-297; 5, p. 377-382]. The satellite of the Ottoman Empire, Dagestan and Chechnya, are geopolitical areas constantly oppressing Eastern Georgia. The constant impulsive raids of the mountaineers cause particular damage to the economy of the kingdom, the agriculture is ruined and the only issue to think is a problem of physical survival.

The second problem is the disruption of Georgia's unique social landscape that is a slow action mine. Purchase of captives, carried out by the nobles of western Georgia in agreement and based on the order of the Ottoman Empire, has a lethal effect on Georgian statehood, since a unique social landscape is the pillar of statehood guaranteeing internal peace of the country. We have achieved an unprecedented event as a result of preserving the referred landscape - Bagrationi royal dynasty is the only one in the world history not being confronted by its own population.

This segment of the Ottoman imperial concept on the one hand aims to shift the management of the Georgian kingdoms to the Byzantine model, when everyone has an equal right to be king / emperor, which is a pretty tempting motivation to encourage internal turmoil and on the other hand, facilitates maximum alienation of the upper classes

from the lower classes, which is a major precondition for the country's internal permanent unrest and confrontation of the population with the royal dynasty.

Third and the most important factor – alienation of the North Caucasus, rather hard process for Georgia started with the attempt of the Ottoman Empire. North Caucasus, formerly a part of unified Georgian cultural sphere, alienated through Islamization [2, p. 151-156] and transformed into a puppet of the Ottoman Empire.

These three problems, posed by the Ottoman Empire as both a rapid and a slow-acting mines are clearly aimed at undermining the Georgian state system model.

This is a continuation of the policy pursued by the world empires of all times and formations (Achaemenid Iran, Rome, Byzantium, Ottoman ...) for centuries against the united Caucasian House.

Therefore, the anti-Ottoman movement, acquiring an orderly, consistent character in the form of the Greek Project, became especially important not only in terms of strengthening the Georgian state, but also in terms of its rise to a new qualitative reality.

This became clear in the 1770s, when Kartli-Kakheti state actually became dominant in the Caucasus, that was considered as a precondition for the restoration of a unified Caucasian political community.

Erekle II pursues a rather diplomatic policy towards Russia with the desire to execute the Greek Project, with the perspective Georgia could have received in case the implementation of the project. Obviously, he is well aware of imperial intentions of the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg, he has daily contacts with the backstage considering the statehood of Georgian royal principalities as an anti-Russian event.

### **Conclusions**

Without the Greek project, it is impossible to explain Erekle's multifaceted diplomatic moves, quite compromising and deliberate relations with the rulers of the Russian Empire and frequent endurance of personal insults.

Such a deliberate policy of Erekle towards Russia originates from state thinking. Erekle never puts his royal ambitions above the interests of the state, he never acts solely based on personal feelings and emotions. It is obvious from his appeasable and deliberate actions, that he is waiting something important for his country.

The Greek Project has to ensure benefits that are the main motivation of King Erekle's patience. The referred benefits for the country make Erekle endure repeated personal insults from Russia. State interest is of paramount importance for Erekle. This is the thesis drawing a red line throughout the life of the King of Kartli-Kakheti. From this viewpoint, it is quite interesting what where the benefits expected by Georgian Royal Court and Feudal Society from Russia for such inhuman patience.

This question is answered by the Russian-Austrian Greek project. If implementing the latter:

1. Elimination of external factors hindering the unification of western and eastern Georgia seemed quite real.
2. Most part of the Caucasus would be within the environment of Christians minimizing the geographical area for the Christian community that may be threatened by Muslims.
3. By neutralizing the Ottoman Imperial Syndrome, the North Caucasus would return to the Caucasian cultural environment, part of which, especially Dagestan, became the satellite of the Ottomans. Consequently, the passes from the North Caucasus would become a part of the unified Caucasian political area.
4. By neutralizing the Ottoman Imperial Syndrome, it would be possible to restore the unprecedented unique Georgian social landscape existing in the world being the main pillar of Georgian statehood throughout the Georgian history.
5. In case of neutralizing the Ottoman threat, a unified Caucasian political space would gain distinct economic incentives and opportunities, through transferring the eastern shores of the Black Sea under the influence of the latter since the referred area gave the possibility to develop active trade relations with Western European countries.
6. Christian globalization, a peaceful political environment would create a quite fertile prospect for the restoration of the Silk Road, which would be especially beneficial not only for Kartli-Kakheti and other Georgian kingdoms, but for the whole region as well.
7. According to the Greek Project, as a result of such political, social and cultural impulses, a secure geopolitical environment would be formed around the Caucasus, which gave the whole region a chance to regain its geopolitical function of world importance, to make the dream of Georgian kings of all time come true.

Based on the above-mentioned factors we must explain that despite a number of anti-Georgian actions clearly expressed by the Russian Empire since the 70s of the XVIII century, anti-Russian sentiments in Georgia did not take a shape of systemic resistance. Anti-Russian sentiments acquired a systemic character after the Russian Empire introduced the verdict of abolition Georgian Kingdom to the nobility of Kartli-Kakheti on April 12, 1802 through an unusual political performance [48, p. 14; 33, p. 15].

The referred decision of St. Petersburg Imperial Court was followed by 5 organized anti-Russian revolts in Georgia over the next 30 years [39, p. 201-214; 22, p. 2-15; 23, p. 320-352; 40, p. 107-114; 16, p. 101-132; 24, p.

46-83; 8, p. 336-342; 38, p. 221-245], proving that Georgian political society would tolerate neither the loss of statehood nor the Russian Occupation.

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